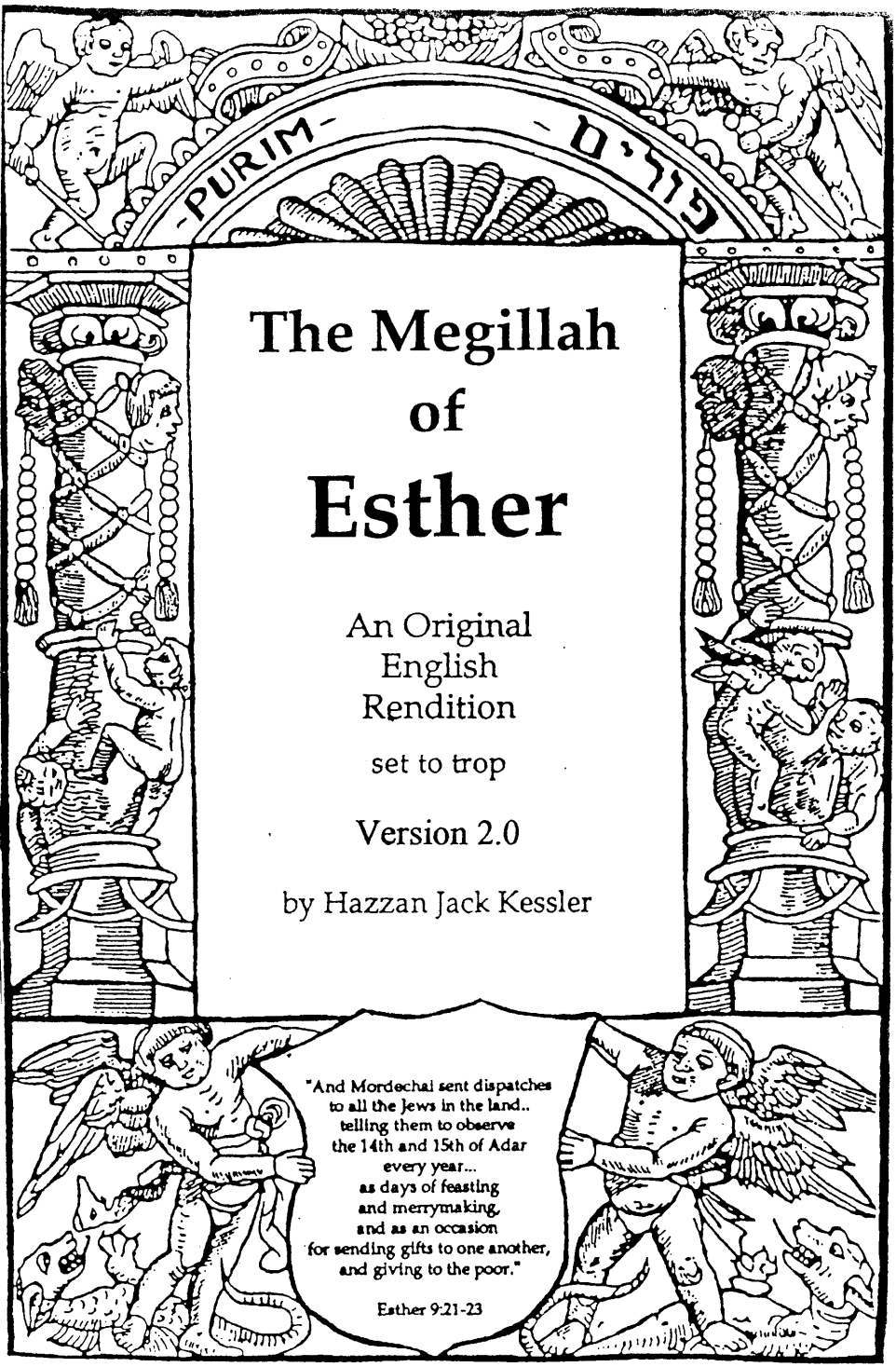

The Megillah of Esther

An Original English Rendition

set to trop

Version 2.0

by Hazzan Jack Kessler

"And Mordechai sent dispatches
to all the Jews in the land..
telling them to observe
the 14th and 15th of Adar
every year...
as days of feasting
and merrymaking,
and as an occasion
for sending gifts to one another,
and giving to the poor."

Esther 9:21-23

The Megillah of Esther

An Original English Rendition

Our Jewish heritage is as rich treasury of the accumulated wisdom (and wit) of the many centuries of our remarkable history. One of the greatest challenges facing the contemporary Jewish community outside Israel is that of making this heritage accessible, in light of the language barrier posed by classical Hebrew.

A successful formula employed by a growing number of congregations and havurot is the singing of Biblical texts – Torah, Haftarot, and Megillot – in English which has been set to Trop, the ancient melodic chant system for these texts. For many, this is an ideal way to communicate the meaning of the Hebrew text.

This setting of Megillat Esther is an imaginative, humorous rendition of the story of Purim. Sing it entirely in English, or do it in sections alternating this English with Hebrew.

This Megillah encourages involvement! The English text is simple and fun for all ages. The goal is to make Purim, well, Purim: lots of *meshugass,* with the underlying message that it's just flat-out great to be Jewish!

Hazzan Jack Kessler

Blessings Before the Megillah

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל מִקְרָא מְגִלָּה.

Baruch Ata Adonai Elohenu Melech ha'Olam asher kidshanu b'mitsvotav v'tsivanu al mikra Megilla

Blessed be You, Adonai, our God, Master of the Cosmos, who makes us holy through your *mitsvot*, and the reading of this *Megilla*.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בַּזְּמַן הַזֶּה:

Baruch Ata Adonai Elohenu Melech ha'Olam she'asa nisim la'avotenu bayamim hahem bazman hazeh

Blessed be You, Adonai, our God, Master of the Cosmos, who has done great things for our ancestors, in their days, at this time.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁהֶחֱיָנוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לַזְּמַן הַזֶּה:

Baruch Ata Adonai Elohenu Melech ha'Olam she-hech'yanu v'kimanu v'higiyanu lazman hazeh

Blessed be You, Adonai, our God, Master of the Cosmos, who gives us life, strength, and the gift of this happy time!

Once upon a time, in the time of Ahash'verosh

Now this was the Ahash'verosh whose empire

extended all the way from India to Ethiopia;

In the third year of his reign

in the capital city of Shushan

he threw a huge party for all his ministers

and his chief servants.....

just to impress them with his fantastic wealth

and greatness

This party lasted seven full days;

Everyone had all they could eat and drink

from beautiful golden dishes

including some the invaders took

from our holy Temple;

The festivities went on and on and on and on and on;

And on the seventh day

when the king was pretty drunk

he called for Queen Vashti

to dance before the whole crowd

dressed in only her crown

Now Vashti was no coward but when she refused

the king's rage boiled over

Vashti was fired as queen

and banished from Shushan forever

Not long afterward when the king sobered up

he wondered what to do for a new queen

His ministers advised him to have a beauty contest

so the most gorgeous woman in the whole empire

would be his new queen

And so Mordechai the Jew sent his niece Esther

to try out for the job

And Esther was the most beautiful of all

so she became queen of the Persian empire;

Esther was careful and didn't tell anyone

that she was a Jew;

Her uncle Mordechai would sit outside the palace

to keep in touch with Esther;

Now just in case you think

that this is the end of the story

hang on-- there's a *lot* to come;

One day Mordechai heard two guards

plotting to murder the king;

Mordechai reported what he had heard

and the king's life was saved;

For this nobody thanked him

but his name was written in the king's records;

Sometime after all these happenings

the king appointed a new Prime Minister;

His name was ***Haman***

The king's new minister had a very big ego

and loved to have people bow down to him ;

One day he and his officers passed by Mordechai

who as usual was sitting by the palace gate ;

but Mordechai refused to bow down to ***Haman***

When the officers told him to bow down

Mordechai said: I am a Jew

and I don't bow to anyone but my God

I serve the Holy One

and this makes me free ;

Haman was absolutely furious

and went to the king and said:

O your Highness, Beloved and Mighty

and Fantastic and Awesome King

I have bad news for you :

There is a people

scattered throughout your Empire

that doesn't follow your laws :

Now this is terrible! But I can take care of them

If you give me the OK I'll waste them

and they'll never bother you again

I'll even bring in some more money

for your treasury :

And the king said: sounds fine to me

gei gesunte-heit

do what you want with these people

Now leave me alone--

I've got a date with the Queen :

And so all the days of the year

were written on pieces of paper

and put in a box

and one piece was taken out by ***Haman***

This would be the day

that all the Jews would be killed :

And so the news went out by express riders

to all parts of the empire

to kill all the Jews

men, women and children

rich, poor, young and old

on the fourteenth day of Adar

now that's tonight :

Also a special gallows was built

to hang the Jew Mordechai

who wouldn't bow down to ***Haman***

Now when the Jews heard this

they thought they were doomed for sure

but Mordechai got a message to Esther :

He said: You have a chance

to change the course of history

Go for it! Go talk to the king!

This may be the work of the Holy One of Israel

You may have become queen

just so you'd have the chance

to save your people :

Now Esther was terrified

because if she went to the king

without being invited

the king might get mad and kill her

but she decided to do it :

So Esther dressed in her snappiest low-cut queen outfit,

and she walked into the throne room, uninvited.

She went up to the king on his throne

and she went down on her knees,

and the king was glad to see her

And the king said, (dramatic pause)

"Esther baby! Good to see you!

You look great! What can I give you?

Ask for anything, you can have it,

up to 50 percent of the whole kingdom."

Queen Esther said: "my King, I'd like you to come

to a special little party in my part of the palace

just you and me, dear king

and oh yes, just for fun

please bring ***Haman***"

That night, the king had insomnia.

So he called for the court records to be read out loud,

so that he could be bored to sleep.

The story was told of how Mordecai reported

on the plot against the king

The king said, "wait a minute, this guy saved my life,

and we never did anything for him?"

think, think, think, think, think, think, think.

ok, no good ideas. is anybody else around?"

and ***Haman*** by coincidence just happened

to be hanging around

near the king's chambers in the middle of the night

so the king called him in and asked,

"What should be done for a man

the king has decided to honor?"

and ***Haman***, in his typical self-absorbed

narcissistic way of thinking,

thought: *he must mean me*!

so he said: "such a man should be dressed

in the king's robes,

and sat upon the king's best horse,

and paraded through the city,

led by someone who calls out, over and over:

"This is a man the king is delighted to honor."

So the king said:

"Excellent idea! do it for the Jew Mordecai!

You will be the one to lead the horse through the streets!

Make it so! so let it be written, so let it be done!"

And so: the next night, after the end

of a very, very, very long day,

Haman dragged himself home,

and told the whole pathetic story to his wife and followers.

His wife said: "What?

and you wanna whack *this* guy?

Are you outta your mind? fuggedaboutit!

This is not a coincidence!

This dude is nothing but trouble!

His karma will run over your dogma!"

But at that very moment,

the king's guards came knocking on the door
(make banging noises)

to escort ***Haman*** to that fateful dinner

And so the king and ***Haman*** went to Esther's party:

the king was in a good mood, and said to Esther:

"Tell me, dear Queen, what do you want now?

It shall be my royal command."

And Esther cried out: "Save my life!

Someone is trying to murder me

and all my people!

Save me, save me, O please please save me!"

And the king shouted: "Who? What? Where?

Who could do such a terrible thing?"

And Esther said: This one! This Evil One – ***HAMAN***

Now the Evil One could see that he had a problem

and bowed down to beg for mercy

but he just happened to trip

over Esther's gown -- pulling it down

and he landed right on top of Esther

and the king said "what? how dare you

try to make whoopee with the Queen?

get your hands off the royal assets

boy you in a heap of trouble"

He gave orders and guards came with handcuffs

and chains and very unfriendly expressions

and took away ***Haman***

At that moment, just by coincidence,

one of the king's ministers came in and said:

"Excuse me, your Majesty,

What do you want to do with the gallows

out in front of the palace,

that were built for the Jew Mordecai,

the one who saved your life?"

And Esther said: "Wait a minute - he's my uncle!"

Then the king said: "What? No more mister nice guy

use the gallows to hang ***HAMAN***

Now the story's not quite over

The king didn't like to change his orders

once he'd given them

so the order to kill all the Jews

was still in force

But Esther begged and pleaded

and the king gave the order

that the Jews could defend themselves

so that when their enemies

came to attack them

the Jews survived by fighting back

Then the king made Mordechai his prime minister

And gave him a very snazzy palace of his own

Which incidentally had belonged to ***HAMAN***

And so almost everybody lived

happily ever after

Now what can we learn from all this?

As it is written in the books of the Wise Ones

coincidence is God's way of staying anonymous

and if you come to a fork in the road

you should definitely take it

At the end of the day

when we take off the masks we wear for the world

Who are we really?

We can all be Mordechai

We can all be Esther

(all rise)

Stand up for justice

Don't bow to evil

We serve the Holy One

and this makes us free!

Blessings after the Megillah

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
הָרָב אֶת רִיבֵנוּ וְהַדָּן אֶת דִּינֵנוּ
וְהַנּוֹקֵם אֶת נִקְמָתֵנוּ
וְהַמְשַׁלֵּם גְּמוּל לְכָל אוֹיְבֵי נַפְשֵׁנוּ
וְהַנִּפְרָע לָנוּ מִצָּרֵינוּ.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי הַנִּפְרָע לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל
מִכָּל צָרֵיהֶם הָאֵל הַמּוֹשִׁיעַ:

Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheynu Melech ha-Olam
Harav et riveynu v'ha-dan et dineynu
v'ha-nokeym et nik'mateynu
v'ha-m'shaleym g'mul l'chol oy'vey nafsheynu
v'ha-nifra lanu mi-tzareynu.
Baruch Ata Adonai ha-nifra l'amo Yisrael
mi-kol tzarey-hem, ha-El ha-moshia.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Master of the Cosmos,
Who helps us in our struggles,
Who brings our enemies to justice.
Blessed are You Adonai, by whose power
Your people Israel is delivered from all enemies.

The Megillah of Esther
An Original English Rendition

Text copyright ©1990 by Hazzan Jack Kessler
All rights reserved. Reproduction by permission of the author.
228 West Hortter St. Philadelphia PA 19119
goldenmedina@comcast.net
Second Edition, Version 2.0, 2016